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Memories

(Episode 23)

A mountain range loomed ahead of us as we proceeded from Hudaibiyyah, and one mountain-top appeared as if it had a crown on its head. Pointing to it, an Arab fellow traveler said: "Jabal An-Nur!" Meaning the mountain which contains the cave of Hira where the noble leader of the two worlds (peace be upon him) was bestowed Prophethood, and from where that Revelation first descended which spread the light of guidance throughout the world.

We thus entered Makkah Mukarramah with a tempest of emotions in our hearts. Madrasa Sawlatiyya was located in Haaratul Baab in those days. The dean of the Madrasa, Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Saleem Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him), very graciously granted us a room in the Madrasa to stay. In those days, most people from India and Pakistan used to come for Hajj by sea and would stay in the *Haramain Shareefain* for months. Instead of hotels, they would either rent houses near the Haram or would stay in traveler lodges called "*Ribaat*" which were built by philanthropists from various countries for the people visiting for Hajj. Many people used to stay in these "*Ribaat*". Hotels were not much in vogue. Thus, *Hujjaj* would come equipped with cooking paraphernalia. Flour, rice, spices etc. would all be transported by ship. And many charitable people would send food items for *Hajis* to Madrasa Sawlatiyya which the administrators of the Madrasa would distribute among *Hajis*. The room in which we spread our beddings on the floor also contained a huge pile of wheat for the same purpose.

After keeping our luggage, we performed a fresh *Wudu* (ablution) and entered the sacred Haram with throbbing hearts. This must have been around ten in the morning. When I first gazed upon the *Ka'aba*, I could not believe my eyes that I was really looking at the very *Baitullah* (House of Allah) I had been imagining for years. Fortunately, the *Mataaf* was totally empty at that time with hardly twenty or thirty people performing *Tawaf*. I thus got the chance to kiss the *Hajar al-Aswad* in each round without any trouble. Thereafter I presented myself at *Multazam*. There were only a few people here as well, so I got a great opportunity to pour my heart out. In those days, *Maqam Ibrahim* was located inside a small structure and during our stay we had made it our permanent abode, because from here the door of the *Ka'abah* and *Multazam* remained right before our eyes at all times. And the Imam Sahab would stand right in front from here while leading prayers. The well of Zamzam was also situated inside a structure and one could draw its water by throwing in a bucket by one's own hands. We got this blessing as well.

While proceeding towards the sacred Haram the next morning before Fajr, that night of *Hijrah* (migration) passed through my mind in which the noble leader of the two worlds (peace be upon him) broke the siege of the enemies and departed through the streets of Makkah. After Ishraq, we went to *Souq al-Mad'aa* to pass a letter to our respected father's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) friend the

late respected Haji Dawood Maait Sahab. This was a bazaar (which no longer exists) towards the north-east of the honourable *Haram*. The route to this bazaar began with an incline. At the end of this incline, when the street began to slope downwards, was a square palisade. It was popularly believed that this was the place where Hazrat Ibrahim (peace be upon him), after leaving his wife and son Hazrat Ismail (peace be upon him) in the dry valley and before departing for *ash-Shaam*, made the supplication which the Noble Quran has narrated in Surah Ibrahim. It was popularly believed by the locals that this *bazaar* was named "*Mad'aa*" for the same reason, because it means "place of supplication". And one supportive evidence which lends to its plausibility is that the incline was ending here, so it is possible that this was the place where he could take a last look at his respected wife and son, because after going down the slope they would disappear from sight. This inimitable chapter of history, comprising of unparalleled determination and steadfastness and trust in Allah, which Allah Ta'ala gave an everlasting life till the end of the world in the form of Hajj and Umrah, was apparently written here.

It is from this very bazaar of "*Mad'aa*" that the noble messenger (peace be upon him) entered the *Haram* at the time of the conquest of Makkah. Thousands of blessings and greetings upon that conqueror who conquered his blood-thirsty enemies without spilling a single drop of blood; who forgave all and did not enter his conquered land strutting proudly with his chest held out, rather with his neck bowed in humility and tears of gratitude flowing down his eyes. And instead of chanting slogans of victory, his blessed tongue was reciting the verse: *إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا* ("Surely, We have granted you a clear victory").

While passing through this bazaar towards the *Haram*, on the left side was that house of Hazrat Abu Sufyan (may Allah be pleased with him) about which the noble leader of the two worlds (peace be upon him) had publicly announced: "Whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan shall be safe." This house was empty and would be opened to visitors at special request. Alhamdulillah! We got the opportunity to visit it, with the heart echoing the supplication: "O Allah! Your beloved had declared peace for the one who entered this house. Thus, O Allah! Please grant us peace from your anger and punishment."

While returning through the bazaar of "*Mad'aa*", we also visited that piece of land which is the envy of the lofty sky, which Allah the Glorious and Most High had chosen as the blessed birth place of his beloved (peace be upon him). At the time, a library was built at this place. We entered it with hearts throbbing. How blessed was that land at which was born the greatest benefactor of mankind (peace be upon him)!

Royal palaces had not been built at the south of the honourable *Haram* at the time, and the peak of Mount Abu Qubais could be clearly seen from the courtyard of the *Haram*. A small Masjid could also be seen at the top of the Mount which was called Masjid Bilal, and it was popularly believed by the people of Makkah Mukarramah that this was the very spot where the noble messenger (peace be upon him) performed the phenomenal miracle of splitting the moon in two, which has been alluded to in Surah Qamar in the Noble Quran. For this reason, a second name of the Masjid is also given as "Masjid Shaqqul Qamar". Mount Abu Qubais had some inhabitants as well, and some trails led to the top. After Asar we followed the trails and reached the peak and visited the Masjid. From here, the entire valley of Makkah Mukarramah was visible in one sight. The view took me back the memory lane thousands of years, when

Allah the Glorious and Most High chose this rocky valley for His house to be built, and as a result granted it far more beauty and charm than lush gardens. The heat was so severe that walking without shoes was akin to burning one's feet. Even in the sacred Haram, one could not put one's feet on rocky or cemented floor for more than a few seconds. But we were so absorbed by the sights of this sacred land that our hearts and minds did not even sense the heat, and the heart was overflowing with such joy as is not experienced even amid lush verdant gardens.

After spending two days in Makkah Mukarramah, for some reason we decided to present ourselves in Madinah Munawwarah first, and to thereafter return here for a relatively longer stay. There existed no direct road from Makkah Mukarramah to Madinah Munawwarah in those days. Thus, one had to go to Jeddah first and then take a bus or taxi from there.

Therefore, on 20 June 1963 (27 Muharram 1383H) we prayed Zuhr in the *Haram* and thereafter boarded a taxi, which charged its fare per passenger, and were on our way. The heat was at its peak and the hot sirocco wind blew even at Fajr time, and after Zuhr the heat knew no bounds. Air-conditioned vehicles were also not so much in vogue in those days. When the car left the precincts of the city, it felt as if the entire car had become an oven. It was then that we realized that in our zeal to visit Madinah Munawwarah we had not chosen the right time to travel. We managed to get through the grueling journey and reached Jeddah by Asar. From there we took a second taxi and the rapturous journey to Madinah Munawwarah began. The following couplets of the late Maahir Sahab came to mind:

پاک دل، پاک نفس، پاک نظر کیا کہنا
بعد مکے کے مدینے کا سفر کیا کہنا
سنگریزے ہیں کہ جاگی ہوئی قسمت کے نجوم
خار منزل ہیں کہ انگشت خضر کیا کہنا
تپش شوق بھی ہے، گرمی موسم بھی ہے
اور اُس پہ مرا سوز جگر کیا کہنا

Translation:

Pure heart, pure soul, pure sight, how wonderful

After the journey to Makkah, a journey to Madinah, how wonderful

Are these rocks or the stars of my fortune?

Are these thorns on the path to the destination or the finger of Khidr, how wonderful

Along with the heat of passion is the heat of the weather,

And on top of that is the heat of my heart, how wonderful

In those days the road towards Madinah Munawwarah used to pass through the strip of land known as Tihama, whose nights are famous for being cool and pleasant. Thus, the heat subsided by Maghrib time and the already-blissful journey became comfortable in terms of the weather as well. On reaching the town of Mastoorah we had dinner at a traditional coffee shop. The fresh fish from the Red Sea offered great hospitality to the taste buds. The person in charge of serving the food was an Aseel Arab whose name was Hamood Bin Ghaali. He displayed the traditional Arab hospitality so warmly that we became very frank with him. As a gesture of goodwill, I offered to him: "Come to Pakistan". He replied: "Never". I asked: "Why not?" He replied: "إنَّ الراقد في بلادنا كالعابد في بلادكم". Meaning: "The person sleeping in our country is like the one engaged in worship in yours." We became such friends that while travelling towards Madinah Munawwarah many times afterwards as well, we would look for him in Mastoorah. And he would also be very affectionate towards us. Thus, when we came for Hajj the next year with our respected father, I looked for Hamood and introduced him to our respected father. In that very meeting, it was as if he became infatuated with our respected father, and took a promise from us to meet him whenever we passed through this area. Therefore, this routine of meeting him continued for many years, until *Tareeq al-Hijrah* was constructed when the route changed and Mastoorah no longer fell in the way.

That road towards Madinah Munawwarah passed through Badr as well and we had negotiated with the driver that he would let us stay for a while at Badr. By Isha, we had reached that valley which had witnessed the first battle between Islam and disbelief under the leadership of the leader of the two worlds (peace be upon him), and where Allah Ta'ala bestowed a manifest victory to three hundred and thirteen poorly armed men over one thousand armed warriors. We first visited the hill which the noble Quran has recounted with the words "العدوة الدنيا" where the Muslims had encamped. From here, we saw "العدوة القصوي" in front where Abu Jahl's battalion had pitched their camp. It was between these two hills that that battle took place which should be called a miracle in the history of wars. At a short distance from here was a Masjid called "Masjid 'Areesh". In Arabic, a thatched canopy is called "'Areesh". This was the place where a thatched canopy had been erected for the noble leader of the two worlds (peace be upon him). It was here that he had supplicated for victory in the battle. Each step taken on this holy land unleashed tempests of emotions in my heart, and scenes from the past flashed through my eyes. In the end we presented ourselves at the graveyard of the martyrs of Badr, which was located at some distance. May Allah Ta'ala shower His mercies upon them; these were those blessed souls who attained the blessing of being the first to present their lives as offerings during Jihad. After passing our *salams* (greetings) to them, we continued our journey.

This journey to Madinah Munawwarah was so rapturous that despite the prolonged journey in this searing heat, each step towards it awakened a fresh fervour in the heart. When Madinah Munawwarah drew near and its lights loomed ahead, Bhai Sahab (respected Muhammad Wali Raazi) impulsively began reciting the following couplet of respected Nazar Amrohi:

سجدہ طلب ہے راہ کا ہر ذرّہ اے نظر!

کیا ہم حدودِ کوچہ جانان میں آگئے؟

O eyes! Each particle of this path deserves deep reverence!

Have we reached the precincts of the neighbourhood of the beloved?

With fluttering hearts we reached Madinah Munawwarah in the last part of the night. Masjid Nabawi used to remain closed at night in those days so we could not present ourselves immediately. A *Ribaat* named Istafa Manzil was located in front of Masjid Nabawi, which had been made *waqf* (endowed) for visitors from Pakistan and India. Its *Mutawalli* (manager), the late Istafa Khan Sahab, hailed from Karachi. (Now this place has been annexed to the extension of the Masjid Nabawi). We were supposed to stay there but when we came to it, its doors were also closed. However, *charpais* on the street in front of the Masjid were available for rent. We rented two *charpais* at two riyals each and slept therein.

With the grace and favour of Allah Ta'ala, the moment finally arrived the next morning, waiting and yearning for which years had passed. A worthless particle was standing before that sacred *Rawdah* (chamber), in front of whose awe and splendour all powers of words and eloquence are left breathless:

ادب گا ہے ست زیر آسمان از عرش نازک تر
نفس گم کرده می آید جنید و با یزید این جا

There is a place of propriety, though under the sky, more delicate than the 'Arsh (throne)

It is the place where Junaid and Ba Yazid came with hushed breaths

It is normally said and felt that Makkah Mukarramah is a place of *Jalal* (awe) while Madinah Munawwarah is a place of *Jamal* (splendour). But this worthless one found it at once a manifestation of *Jalal* (awe) and *Jamal* (splendour). Standing before that embodiment of *Jamal* (peace be upon him), the concern remains each moment that in expressing my love nothing should be done which goes against his honourable temperament. As my elder brother respected Muhammad Zaki Kaifi Sahab has said:

میرے محبوب! میری ایسی وفا سے توبہ!
جو ترے دل کی کدورت کا سبب بن جائے

My beloved! I reject such expressions of love!

Which become a source of distress for your heart

Anyway! The feelings experienced when standing before the sacred *Rawdah* (chamber) at that time cannot be fully put into words.

Thereafter we were blessed with staying in Madinah Munawwarah for eleven days. Istafa Manzil, where we were staying, was located at an especially blessed location because it was there that Hazrat Abu Talha Ansari's (may Allah be pleased with him) garden, known as "*Bir Ha*", was located. The Noble Messenger (peace be upon him) used to like the water of its well. That well still existed at the time and we were also blessed with visiting it and drinking from its water. During our stay in Madinah Munawwarah, we would spend most of our time from Fajr to Zuhr in visiting various sites. Maulana

Ahmad Abdullah Memoni Sahab, who was a friend of our respected father's (may Allah's mercy be upon him), was very knowledgeable about the various sites of Madinah Munawwarah, and our class fellow Maulana Abdur Razzaq Sahab Muradabadi had also migrated to Madinah Munawwarah at the time. Both of these respected individuals provided us with invaluable guidance, and besides the notable sites which can be visited even today, we were also blessed with visiting several such sites which are impossible to visit today. For example, on our first visit to Quba we visited the house of Hazrat Kulthoom Bin Hadam (may Allah be pleased with him) in which the noble leader of the two worlds (peace be upon him) had stayed for fourteen days. This house still existed for a long time afterwards as well, but today no signs of it remain. Similarly, on the western side of Masjid Quba was that garden and well which is called "*Bir Arees*", and in a Hadith it is mentioned that the noble leader of the two worlds (peace be upon him) and his three successors sat on the well with their blessed legs dangling. We presented ourselves there as well. Now that well has been incorporated into the road. During that stay, we visited Quba on foot three times, and may Allah Ta'ala bestow his complete forgiveness upon Maulana Abdur Razzaq Sahab; he showed us various routes which went through date gardens. The heat was so severe at the time that the hot sirocco wind would blow even at Fajr time, but these paths through date gardens were cool and pleasant. And the thought that these may have been the paths once trodden by the noble leader of the two worlds (peace be upon him) would infuse us with delight at each step. On all three of those days, we would pray Fajr behind Shaykh Abdul Aziz bin Salih (may Allah's mercy be upon him) and then head for Quba through the path which featured date gardens, and pray Ishraq in Masjid Quba. I was twenty years old and brother Muhammad Wali Sahab was twenty nine, and our bodies were not acquainted with fatigue yet. Thus, for most of our visits to notable sites we would walk. We walked to the valley of Uhud as well. On our way we visited Masjid Mustarah, where the noble messenger (peace be upon him) had stayed while on his way to Uhud. We stayed there for a while then continued to Uhud. While in the ground of Uhud we imagined God knows how many scenes from the battle of Uhud, and then prayed Ishraq in the cave where the noble messenger (peace be upon him) stayed while he was wounded. The heart just desired for this blessed atmosphere of Madinah Munawwarah to become infused into each and every vein and artery of my body.

Adjacent to the Masjid Nabawi, the houses (after renovation) of Hazrat Usman, Hazrat Abbas and Hazrat Hasan (may Allah be pleased with them all) were still conserved in those days. And a bow was kept for visitation about which it was popularly believed that this was the bow which the noble messenger (peace be upon him) had give to Hazrat Sa'd Bin Abi Waqqas during the battle of Uhud with the words: "ارم يا سعد! فداك أبي وأمي" ("Shoot, O Sa'd! May my father and mother be sacrificed for you"). There was no way to verify that this was the same bow, but in such matters at least the probability stemming from popular belief is sufficient for one who loves. We thus cooled our eyes with visiting it. A narrow street on the eastern side of Masjid Nabawi would lead to Jannah al-Baqi. It contained houses of antiquated building style, and the area of *Awali* would begin behind Baqi which contained date gardens and some mud houses as well. I would sometimes pass by this area to engrave scenes from the past into my mind, and it would fill me with a surreal feeling of elation. In short, we desired that:

جہاں جہاں ترے نقش قدم نظر آئے

جبین شوق لئے ہم وہیں وہیں پہنچے

Translation:

Whichever place we spotted your footprints

We reached there with our zealous foreheads

Many pious seniors had gathered in Madinah Munawwarah at the time. Hazrat Maulana Badr Aalam Sahab Muhajir Madani (may Allah's mercy be upon him), though he had become incapacitated due to illness by that time, would continue his writings through dictation while lying down, and would also conduct *Islahi* gatherings every day. Alhamdulillah! During this stay we got the opportunity to greatly benefit from his *Islahi* gatherings. We were also blessed with attending the gathering of Hazrat Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Sahab Madani (may Allah's mercy be upon him), who was a venerable Shaikh of the Naqshbandi Silsila, and we also received a great share from his gracious hospitality. We were also blessed with presenting ourselves in the service of Hazrat Maulana Sher Muhammad Sahab Sindhi (may Allah's mercy be upon him), whose book *Zubdatul Manasik* is considered an authority on the topic of *manasik* (rites) of Hajj, and it would not be an exaggeration if he were called the Imam of *manasik* of his time. We got the opportunity to visit him many times, and the mind was left bewildered observing his ascetic way of life, that how simple a life is this mountain of knowledge and excellence living. We also visited Hazrat Maulana Abd ash-Shakoor Sahab Deobandi (may Allah's mercy be upon him), who was a great *Waliullah* (Friend of Allah) of his time, after locating his house with some difficulty. He was the father of our maternal aunt's husband. He had also become incapacitated and was living in an extremely constricted and dark house. There was no one present in the house to serve him except his old wife. We learned that some of his associates sometimes visited him to serve him. He was suffering from various illnesses and had become extremely weak, but was an embodiment of patience and self-sufficiency!

All of these elders were those who had migrated to Madinah Munawwarah, not for earning a living, but solely because of Madinah Munawwarah, and with the desire to be buried there. They underwent tremendous hardships and made great sacrifices for this. Today they all have reached their destination:

خدا رحمت کند این عاشقان پاک طینت را

Translation:

May God have mercy upon these lovers possessing pure characters

Having spent eleven days in this paradise of our emotions and fantasies, we departed for Makkah Mukarramah. We entered *Ihram* from *Dhul Hulaifah*. On our way we were blessed with presenting our *salams* (greetings) to the martyrs of Badr one more time, and with Jeddah occurring on our way, we re-entered the cradle of Makkah Mukarramah. This time we stayed here for about seventeen days.